TREHGAM : A VILLAGE OF SHARED HARMONY AND HERITAGE

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""Dedicated To those who believe in peace,humanity and the fraternity, To those who toil to eradicate the hatred, animosity and the oppression, To those who advocate justice and equality, And to those who dream of a nation built on moral values.""

Introduction of Trehgam Town

This village lies geographically on the northern side Uttra, which is mentioned in the Rājataraṅgiṇī. However, the term Trehgam was first used by Khwāja Muhammad Azam Didamari in his chronicle, namely Waqiat-i-Kashmir (also known as TaRikhi-Kashmir-i-Azami).This historical village is located 9 kilometres west of the frontier district of Kupwara. The village has served as a melting pot of ancient settlers from early historical periods. It gained importance across different ages, especially as a connecting point between Shardha and Shivloora—the earlier tehsiel station of Uttara. The town flourished during the Chak period and was reportedly burnt thrice during the reign of Zain-ul- Abidin, also known as Budshah. The village of Trehgam features a Hindu temple and the nearby shrine of a great Sufi saint, Syed Ibrahim Bukhari (RA), symbolizing communal harmony and peaceful coexistence. It has long served as a sanctuary for learned men and religious scholars. One of Trehgam's central landmarks is the Naag (pond), located beside the Grand Mosque and near the temple—a representation of the village's religious syncretism. The pond, abundant with fish year-round, is celebrated for its natural beauty. Sir Walter Lawrence writes, "The pond of Trehgam indicates the utmost beauty of Kashmir."The proximity of the Muslim shrine, Jamia Masjid, and Shiv temple on the same bank of the spring is a living testament to interfaith reverence. Limestone has also been discovered in the hills behind the village. Geographical Location The Trehgam village is located in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, India. Geographically, Trehgam lies in the northern part of the Kashmir Valley, close to the river Kishanganga. Trehgam is situated at a latitude of about 34.5141° N and longitude of 74.1709° E. This area is known for its scenic beauty and historical significance within the region. It is one of the famous historical villages of Kupwara, having played an important role from ancient times onward. The village holds cultural and political relevance in modern Kashmiri consciousness, being associated with resistance and regional memory.

Historical Significance of Trehgam Village.

Trehgam, a local town, was ruled by regional feudatories called Chaks (locally known as Chakdars) before the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. Author of Baharistan-i-Shahi mentions that the town was burnt thrice during Zain-ul-Abidin's rule. It served as an important link between Kashmir and the tribal regions in the northwest. Since medieval times, Trehgam has been home to many sections of the Kashmiri population. Historical sources suggest that it gave shelter to learned men like Syed Ismayeel Bukhari and Syed Ibrahim Bukhari, and later, figures such as Nutreshi Baba, who were deputed to spread Islamic teachings in the region. Oral traditions also preserve that Zati Shahwali was born and educated in Trehgam—his shrine remains at Drugmulla, Kupwara. The revered Sufi saint Khair Mir Sahib is buried in front of the present Jamia Masjid Shareef, while his disciple, Qadir Sahib, rests at Hirri. Panjer Baba Sahib, a Reshi saint, is believed to have imparted Islamic knowledge in Trehgam, though no trace of his khanqah remains. As for its nomenclature, it is difficult to determine the precise historical origin of the name "Trehgam." A local tradition holds that thirty clans were settled here during the early medieval era, from which the village derived its name—though this remains unverified.[3] Geologically, the village lies on Paleozoic rocks of the Ordovician series, with ferruginous slates, quartzose greywackes, and limestone lying conformably above the Upper Cambrian. To the north of the village are relics of an ancient lake basin that appeared intermittently during warm interglacial periods, filling the region now known as Kerewas. Atop the Ordovician mountain series (dated to around 425 million years before present) lies a fort that remains unscanned in official archaeological literature.

The Fort and Archaeological Potential of Trehgam

This fort stands on the summit of a thick green forest above the village. You can see the western and northwestern villages from this height. You can also identify many villages in the eastern, southern and some northern areas of the district. The location works like a natural telescopic point. It is likely that this place served as a watch post for the ancient Uttar route. The fort shows similarities to Parihaspora in Pattan and Avantipora. A comparative study suggests a date in the seventh or eighth century CE. The sculptures preserved in the spring below the fort show mixed origins. Some represent Bodhisattvas. Some represent Vishnu and Vaishnavi. Some show forms of Shiva. A linga and yoni are installed at the center of the spring. Water rises from this point and flows outward. The spring is part of a large aquifer that draws water from the nearby mountains. Scientific excavation could help determine the exact age of the fort and the spring. Terracotta and bone samples could be tested through Thermoluminescence(TL) and Carbon-14 analysis.

Above the Jamia Masjid and the Shiv temple, the forest holds the remains of a palace believed to have been built by Pandu Chak. Sikandar Malik said that elders called the site Qila e Shergadi. Oral accounts claim that the monument in the Trehgam forest served as an observation post that covered the entire region. It is possible that during conflict with Zain ul Abidin, the Terhgami Chaks used this height for defense.

A question remains. If the fort predates the medieval conflict, why has Trehgam produced no archaeological remains, even though sources like Kashmir Under the Sultans and Baharistan i Shahi state that the town was burned during the reign of Zain ul Abidin?

Political Legacy and Communal Harmony of Trehgam

On the other side, this historic place stands as solid proof of communal harmony in the Kashmir Valley. Yet, Trehgam is not just a religious symbol; it also represents a rich political and historical legacy, as mentioned in various chronicles. Muhammad Din Fauq and Mohibbul Hassan have documented the long-standing conflict between the Chaks and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (Budshah). While The Valley of Kashmir by Walter Lawrence does not detail these conflicts, it describes "Uttarmachipura, the lovely pool of Trehgam," said to have been constructed by Madan Chak.[2] Although Madan Chak may have been a minor noble at the time, this reference appears only in Lawrence's work. The conflict between Budshah and Pandu Chak is described in Baharistan-i-Shahi, which details how the Chaks rose to feudal prominence despite not being part of the original Damara class. According to the text, Helmat Chak and Lankar Chak entered the system as guests but became entrenched in the local aristocracy. Most historical sources agree that the Chaks originated from the Darads of Dardistan—ferocious and physically strong people whom Shah Mir incorporated into the Sultanate's power structure. By the time of Zain-ul-Abidin, Pandu Chak led the Trehgam branch of the Chaks, but his resistance to forced labor led to his downfall. As punishment, the Sultan executed several Chak leaders and burned their homes. Surviving families were relocated to Kupwara and Trehgam, forming two main branches: Helmat Chak (Sunni–Hanafi) and Lankar Chak (Shia), who settled in Trehgam during the 14th century. When Pandav Chak organized a protest against forced labor during the Sultan's northern tour, it marked the beginning of open resistance. In retaliation for Pandav's defiance, which included burning parts of Zainabad, the Sultan's forces destroyed Chak homes. Pandav fled with his family to Drava (Karnah), but was captured when the Sultan offered land to the people of Drava. All adult males were executed; only women and children survived, and were settled in Trehgam. From this lineage, Hussain, a descendant of Pandav, had ten sons who re-established the Chak legacy—eventually leading to the foundation of the Chak Sultanate. Later, under Mughal rule, the Chaks became rebels. After Akbar's annexation of Kashmir in 1586, the Chaks resisted domination. Despite repeated efforts by governors like Qalich Khan and Saadat Khan, who confiscated Chak properties and forced them into low-status labor, the Chaks continued to revolt. Over time, they retreated into forests and became known as Galwans—horse thieves who terrorized rulers and subjects alike. During the Afghan era, locals even paid protection money to keep their herds safe from these former aristocrats. After the execution of Yusuf Shah Chak by Akbar in Bihar, Trehgam, once a seat of power, passed into new hands. It is said that during the Dogra rule (1846 to 1947), the head priest of this temple was a personal priest to the Dogra Shahi. According to one legend, he kept an "eternal flame" outside Political Legacy and Communal Harmony of Trehgam On the other side, this historic place stands as solid proof of communal harmony in the Kashmir Valley. Yet, Trehgam is not just a religious symbol; it also represents a rich political and historical legacy, as mentioned in various chronicles. Muhammad Din Fauq and Mohibbul Hassan have documented the long-standing conflict between the Chaks and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (Budshah). While The Valley of Kashmir by Walter Lawrence does not detail these conflicts, it describes "Uttarmachipura, the lovely pool of Trehgam," said to have been constructed by Madan Chak.[2] Although Madan Chak may have been a minor noble at the time, this reference appears only in Lawrence's work. The conflict between Budshah and Pandu Chak is described in Baharistan-i-Shahi, which details how the Chaks rose to feudal prominence despite not being part of the original Damara class. According to the text, Helmat Chak and Lankar Chak entered the system as guests but became entrenched in the local aristocracy. Most historical sources agree that the Chaks

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It is said that during the Dogra rule (1846 to 1947), the head priest of this temple was a personal priest to the Dogra Shahi. According to one legend, he kept an "eternal flame" outside the temple, which locals—regardless of religion—helped keep alive by donating part of their daily firewood. This act of communal generosity impressed the Dogra ruler, who subsequently exempted the residents of Trehgam from forced labor or serfdom. Locals recall that a Hindu priest used to sit near the village mosque, enjoying high regard within the Dogra administration. As a result, the village remained largely free from begar (forced labor), a rare privilege under the Dogras. For over a century, the priests of this temple helped establish Trehgam as a spiritual and cultural nucleus in the Kupwara region. By the late 20th century, a mosque was constructed beside the temple, reinforcing the town's reputation for communal harmony. The pond of Trehgam—referred to by Walter Lawrence as one of the most beautiful scenes in Kashmir—is sacred to both communities and symbolizes this enduring harmony. The Grand Mosque, Hindu temple, and the shrine of Sufi saint Syed Ibrahim Bukhari all share a common courtyard, making Trehgam a powerful emblem of Kashmir's pluralistic past. But I had my first opportunity to work on my hometown's iconic feature—the Trehgam Pond. The idea that every civilization begins near a water body is a simplification, but it is undeniable that water has played a vital role in the development and sustainability of human societies. Across religions and cultures, water is considered sacred. In the Bible's Book of Genesis, the Spirit of Jehovah hovers over the waters, initiating the creation process by dividing the waters above from those below. This creation narrative, like many others in the Bible, is widely acknowledged to draw from Mesopotamian myths where the god Marduk similarly shapes the cosmos from the waters.In the Qur'an, God's throne is said to rest upon water (11:7), and all living beings, including man, are said to be created from water (24:45; 25:54). In Hinduism, water embodies the divine: Vishnu reclines upon the cosmic ocean, symbolizing preservation and creation.

Water is a purifier, deity, and spiritual medium—ritual pitchers are revered, rivers are worshipped, and sacred poolsk or tirthas are gateways to the spiritual realm.

The Trehgam Pond, believed to be thousands of years old, remains the principal water source for several nearby villages. Walter Lawrence refers to it as “the ultimate beauty of Kashmir” in his The Valley of Kashmir, emphasizing both its natural splendour and cultural importance. The pond is revered by both Hindus and Muslims, making it a powerful symbol of religious unity. It irrigates vast stretches of paddy land and sustains agriculture, especially during water crises. The pond also serves as a community prayer site with ample space for large congregations. On Fridays, designated exits allow worshippers to disperse without obstruction. A water fountain with fish, which remain in the pond year-round, adds to its tranquil beauty. The Trehgam Pond, thus, is not just a geographical feature—it is a living monument of memory, belief, and coexistence.